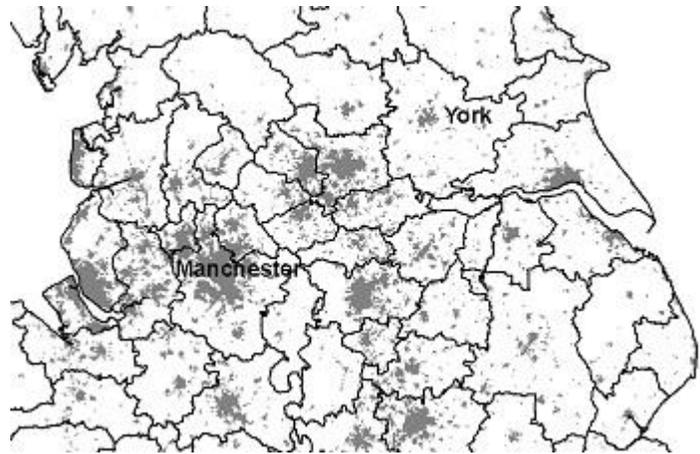


Travel to Work Areas

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Travel to Work Areas (TTWAs) are defined so that the analysis of local social and economic statistics for policy-making and research is more meaningful. Only by using data on TTWAs – not administrative areas like city boundaries – is it possible to accurately compare places in Britain on such key issues such as their unemployment rates. This is because the TTWA definitions are based on the commuting patterns of people in every part of the country, and as a result they represent the geography of British local economic areas.



In fact the research over several decades that underpins the method of defining TTWAs is now recognised as having created a 'best practice' approach to defining local labour markets which has been adopted and adapted in numerous countries across the world. CURDS research has also extended the method to define housing market areas for use in national housing policy.

TTWAs are established as the 'default' definition of local labour markets for the UK Government and in this role they are cited in the HM Treasury Guidance on Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government (The Green Book). Over many years TTWAs have been used to assess the relative need of different areas when allocating public funds. Recent examples of this use include their citation in the process to choose which cities would receive new powers and funding through City Deals and the distribution of the multi-million pound Regional Growth Fund. The robust nature of the definitions – TTWAs are the only official statistical areas defined by academics – has meant that they are also used for research which is critical of government policy, as in trade union research on regional pay policies. The most persistent use of TTWA is in the publication by the Office for National Statistics of regularly released data such as unemployment statistics.



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